# THE CHILD BEFORE GOD

*Accountability, Covenant, and the Hope of the Innocent*

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*"that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written"*
**— 1 Corinthians 4:6**

# PART I — GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

## I.1 — Scripture as the Sole Doctrinal Authority

> *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."* **— 2 Timothy 3:16**
>
> *"...that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written..."* **— 1 Corinthians 4:6**

Every conclusion in this document is derived from what is written in Scripture. No tradition, emotional reasoning, or theological system is permitted to override the text. Where Scripture speaks plainly, we affirm. Where Scripture is silent, we remain silent and plainly say so.

## I.2 — The Two-Witness Standard

> *"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established."* **— Deuteronomy 19:15**
>
> *"...in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."* **— Matthew 18:16**
>
> *"In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."* **— 2 Corinthians 13:1**

Three witnesses confirm the standard itself. Every major claim in this teaching is supported by a minimum of two independent scriptural references. Where a conclusion rests on a single passage, this is plainly stated. Where verses support a point without directly proving it, the word "support" is used rather than "establish."

## I.3 — The Boundary of Revelation

> *"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever..."* **— Deuteronomy 29:29**
>
> *"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."* **— Proverbs 30:6**

This teaching does not assert a universal numerical age of accountability — Scripture does not give one. What is established is a revealed principle: God distinguishes between those with moral knowledge and those without it, and judges accordingly.

# PART II — ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## II.1 — God's Own Judicial Threshold

The clearest Old Testament example of accountability is the Wilderness Judgment of Numbers 14. God does not narrate this distinction incidentally — He adjudicates it. The language is judicial and precise.

> *"Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me."* **— Numbers 14:29**
>
> *"But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."* **— Numbers 14:31**

Both sides of the distinction appear in the same passage: the accountable adults defined and judged (Numbers 14:29 — twenty years and upward), and the children spared and given the land (Numbers 14:31). The direction for the children is not merely away from judgment — it is toward the inheritance.

**— Numbers 14:29 — accountable adults defined and judged**
**— Numbers 14:31 — little ones spared and brought into the land**

## II.2 — Knowledge Defined as the Basis of Accountability

> *"...your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it."* **— Deuteronomy 1:39**
>
> *"Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."* **— Isaiah 7:15–16**

Moses defines why the children were exempt: they had no knowledge between good and evil. Isaiah describes a pre-accountability window in which the child cannot yet distinguish between refusing evil and choosing good. Both passages support the same principle: moral knowledge is the threshold, not age as an arbitrary number.

**— Deuteronomy 1:39 — "no knowledge between good and evil"**
**— Isaiah 7:15–16 — "before the child shall know to refuse the evil"**

## II.3 — The Affirmative: Children Received, Not Merely Spared

> *"...they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it."* **— Deuteronomy 1:39**
>
> *"But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."* **— 2 Samuel 12:23**

The children in Deuteronomy 1:39 are given a positive destination — they shall go in, they shall possess. David speaks with settled hope of reunion concerning his deceased infant: "I shall go

to him." Within the broader witness of David's faith, this supports the conclusion that his deceased infant was not viewed as condemned, but as one David expected to see again in the place where he himself hoped to go.

**— Deuteronomy 1:39 — children given the land (positive direction)**

**— 2 Samuel 12:23 — David's settled hope of reunion with his deceased infant**

# PART III — THE NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMS THE ACCOUNTABILITY PRINCIPLE

The New Testament does not introduce a more demanding standard for guilt and judgment. It confirms and expands what the Old Testament established: that moral accountability is connected to revealed knowledge of God's law.

## III.1 — Scripture Connects Imputed Guilt with Revealed Knowledge

> *"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."* **— Romans 5:13**
>
> *"Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression."* **— Romans 4:15**
>
> *"Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."* **— John 9:41**
>
> *"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."* **— John 15:22**
>
> *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* **— James 4:17**

Romans 5:13 and Romans 4:15 directly state that sin is not imputed and transgression does not exist where there is no law. John 9:41 and John 15:22 address accountability from the direction of increased guilt under revealed light — those who have received greater light bear greater responsibility for rejecting it. John 15:22 speaks to Christ's coming and speaking as the event that removed their excuse. James 4:17 ties guilt to knowledge of what is right. Taken together, these five passages consistently connect imputed guilt with revealed law, moral knowledge, and accountable light. Where God has not given accountable knowledge, Scripture does not charge transgression in the same manner.

**— Romans 5:13 • Romans 4:15 • John 9:41 • John 15:22 • James 4:17 (5 witnesses)**

## III.2 — Guilt Is Individual, Not Inherited

> *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son."* **— Ezekiel 18:20**
>
> *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."* **— Romans 14:12**
>
> *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."* **— 2 Corinthians 5:10**

Each person stands before God for what they themselves have done in the body. The child cannot be charged with the sins of the parent. A child of two unbelieving parents carries no inherited condemnation from the parent's unbelief.

**— Ezekiel 18:20 • Romans 14:12 • 2 Corinthians 5:10 (3 witnesses)**

## III.3 — Death Does Not Equal Condemnation

> *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* **— Romans 5:12**
>
> *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."* **— Hebrews 9:27**

Death and judgment are two distinct events. Children die because death entered the world through Adam and passes upon all. The judgment that follows is individual and conditioned upon what was done in the body. A child who has done nothing that constitutes imputed transgression faces that judgment without personal guilt.

**— Romans 5:12 • Hebrews 9:27 (2 witnesses)**

# PART IV — THE NEW TESTAMENT AFFIRMS: CHILDREN ARE RECEIVED BY GOD

The New Testament does not merely echo the Old Testament's silence on child condemnation. It speaks affirmatively. Jesus makes direct, positive statements about the standing of children before God.

## IV.1 — The Kingdom Belongs to Children

> *"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."* **— Mark 10:14**
>
> *"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* **— Matthew 19:14**

Two Gospel accounts record the same declaration. In that scene, He receives them without accusation, without commanding repentance, and without placing any stated requirement upon them. His silence toward children regarding repentance supports the distinction already established elsewhere: Scripture treats accountable hearers differently from little children.

**— Mark 10:14 • Matthew 19:14 (2 witnesses)**

## IV.2 — The Father's Revealed Care for the Little Ones

> *"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."* **— Matthew 18:14**
>
> *"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."* **— Matthew 18:10**

Matthew 18 opens with Jesus placing a child before the disciples. The "little ones" in this chapter can include the humble and childlike broadly, and the passage carries that wider application. Matthew 18:14 reveals the Father's will concerning "these little ones" in the context Jesus gives — and within that context it is plainly stated that He does not will that one of them should perish. Their angels behold the face of the Father in heaven. Those represented before God in this passage are not represented as condemned.

**— Matthew 18:14 (primary, context-bound — see note) • Matthew 18:10 (convergent)**

> *NOTE — Single Witness: Matthew 18:14 is the single most direct statement of the Father's will regarding children perishing. The "little ones" in Matthew 18 can include disciples as well as children. This passage is used as a strong supporting witness alongside Mark 10:14, Matthew 19:14, and 2 Samuel 12:23.*

## IV.3 — The Standard for Entry Is Childlikeness

> *"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."* **— Matthew 18:3**

> *"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* **— Matthew 18:4**

Jesus does not call adults to bring children up to their standard. He calls adults to come down to the child's. The child is presented as the model of kingdom standing — not as a problem to be solved.

**— Matthew 18:3 • Matthew 18:4 (2 witnesses)**

# PART V — FROM OLD TESTAMENT TO NEW: THE BETTER COVENANT

Does the New Covenant change or worsen the standing of a child who dies before accountability? Scripture answers plainly: the New Covenant is better, not more restrictive.

## V.1 — The New Covenant Is Explicitly Better

> *"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."* **— Hebrews 8:6**
>
> *"By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."* **— Hebrews 7:22**

The New Covenant is not a narrowing of grace — it is an expansion built on better promises. If Scripture gives hope for the child under the lesser covenant, the better covenant gives no reason to reduce that hope.

**— Hebrews 8:6 • Hebrews 7:22 (2 witnesses)**

## V.2 — The Blood of Christ Is More Effectual, Not Less

> *"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* **— Hebrews 9:13–14**
>
> *"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."* **— Romans 5:20**

The logic of Hebrews 9 moves from the lesser to the greater: the blood of Christ is more effectual, not less, than what came before it. If Scripture gives hope for children under the lesser covenant, the better covenant gives no reason to reduce that hope. The movement from shadow to substance strengthens, rather than weakens, the case. Grace in the New Testament does not retreat — it abounds much more.

**— Hebrews 9:13–14 • Romans 5:20 (2 witnesses)**

## V.3 — God Does Not Change

> *"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."* **— Malachi 3:6**
>
> *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."* **— Hebrews 13:8**

The God who received David's infant, who spared Israel's children from the wilderness judgment, who sent His Son to say "of such is the kingdom" — is the same God across both Testaments. His standard of justice does not shift between covenants. The child who dies under the New Covenant stands before the same God who received children under the Old.

**— Malachi 3:6 • Hebrews 13:8 (2 witnesses)**

# PART VI — CHILDREN OF UNBELIEVERS: STILL RECEIVED

Does a child who dies before accountability, born to two unbelieving parents, stand in the same position before God as the child of a believer? The scriptural answer is yes — because the basis of the child's standing before God is not the parent's faith. It is the absence of the child's own imputable transgression.

## VI.1 — The Principle Carries No Qualifier on Parentage

> *"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."* **— Romans 5:13**
>
> *"For where no law is, there is no transgression."* **— Romans 4:15**

Paul's statement contains no condition tied to the child's parents. Sin is not imputed when there is no law. The principle applies to every child who has not yet reached accountable knowledge, regardless of what their parents believe.

**— Romans 5:13 • Romans 4:15 (2 witnesses)**

## VI.2 — Jesus Places No Qualifier on the Children He Receives

> *"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."* **— Mark 10:14**
>
> *"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* **— Matthew 19:14**

Jesus does not say "the children of believers." He says "little children" without restriction. To add a qualifier that Scripture does not add is to go beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6; Proverbs 30:6).

**— Mark 10:14 • Matthew 19:14 (2 witnesses)**

## VI.3 — God Is No Respecter of Persons

> *"For there is no respect of persons with God."* **— Romans 2:11**
>
> *"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."* **— Acts 10:34**

To hold that a child of unbelieving parents is condemned for dying before accountability while a child of believing parents is received — when neither child had accountable knowledge or imputable transgression — is to attribute to God a partiality that Scripture explicitly denies. God judges the soul according to what the soul has done, not according to who the soul's parents were.

**— Romans 2:11 • Acts 10:34 (2 witnesses)**

# PART VII — THE HOLY AND UNCLEAN HOUSEHOLD (1 Corinthians 7:14)

Having established that children who die before accountability are received by God regardless of parental belief, we must address a passage frequently misread as contradicting this. The terms "holy" and "unclean" in 1 Corinthians 7:14 do not mean what many assume.

## VII.1 — The Internal Proof of the Passage

> *"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."* **— 1 Corinthians 7:14**
>
> *"For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"* **— 1 Corinthians 7:16**

The word "sanctified" is applied to the unbelieving spouse. If it meant "saved," the unbeliever would be automatically saved by marriage. But Paul treats the unbeliever's salvation as an open question two verses later. Therefore "sanctified" does not mean "saved." The same word governs the logic applied to the children. If "sanctified" is not salvific for the spouse, "holy" is not a salvation verdict for the child, and "unclean" is not a condemnation verdict.

> *NOTE — Single Witness: "Holy" and "unclean" as covenantal rather than salvific terms rests primarily on the internal logic of 1 Corinthians 7:14–16. There is no second passage that uses this precise pairing in the same way. The internal argument is strong, but the reader should weigh it as such.*

## VII.2 — God Has Always Operated Through Households

The household covenant framework is not a Pauline invention. It runs consistently from Genesis through Acts.

> *"And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."* **— Genesis 7:1**
>
> *"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you..."* **— Exodus 12:13**
>
> *"Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."* **— Acts 11:14**
>
> *"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."* **— Acts 16:31–32**

From Noah to the Passover to Cornelius to the Philippian jailer, God treats the household as an operative covenant unit. Importantly, in Acts 16 the head of the house is addressed first, but the Word is then brought to the whole household — household blessing follows the Word reaching each member. A believing parent brings the household under covenant influence and the reach of the gospel; it does not produce automatic salvation for each member apart from their own hearing and response.

**— Genesis 7:1 • Exodus 12:13 • Acts 11:14 • Acts 16:31–32 (4 witnesses)**

# PART VIII — THE COVENANT ADVANTAGES OF A HOLY HOUSEHOLD

If "holy" and "unclean" describe covenantal position rather than eternal destiny, the question becomes: what does the distinction actually mean? The covenant advantages are real — but they operate in the life of the child moving toward accountability, not as a verdict over a child who dies before reaching it.

Throughout this section, the word "covering" refers to covenant advantage — exposure to truth, prayer, instruction, and godly authority within the home. It does not mean automatic salvation, transferred righteousness, or guaranteed deliverance. The advantage is real; it is not a mechanism of automatic rescue.

## VIII.1 — Access to Truth

> *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"* **— Romans 10:14**
>
> *"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."* **— Deuteronomy 6:6–7**

Faith comes by hearing. A child in a believing household hears the Word consistently. They are being prepared for accountability with the very content they will one day be accountable for. This is a substantial advantage.

**— Romans 10:14 • Deuteronomy 6:6–7 (2 witnesses)**

## VIII.2 — Spiritual Nurture and Training

> *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* **— Ephesians 6:4**
>
> *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* **— Proverbs 22:6**

The believing parent is commanded to actively form the child spiritually before accountability arrives. This training does not guarantee the child's choice when accountability comes — but it sets the trajectory entering it.

**— Ephesians 6:4 • Proverbs 22:6 (2 witnesses)**

## VIII.3 — Prayer and Intercession

> *"And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."* **— Job 1:5**

> *"...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* **— James 5:16**

Job's continual intercession for his children is the model of the believing parent. The righteous person's prayer avails much. A child in a believing household has a parent whose prayers extend God's active work toward that child.

**— Job 1:5 • James 5:16 (2 witnesses)**

## VIII.4 — What the Advantages Do Not Guarantee

Covenant advantage is not a guarantee of salvation. Scripture gives clear examples of children raised in the most privileged households who still chose wickedness when they became accountable:

1. Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas — sons of the high priest, raised in the house of God, called sons of Belial (1 Samuel 2:12)
2. Samuel's sons — sons of the prophet, who walked not in his ways but turned aside after personal gain (1 Samuel 8:3)
3. Hezekiah's son Manasseh — son of one of Judah's most righteous kings, who became one of its most wicked rulers (2 Kings 21:1–2)

The covenant advantages equip the child for accountability. They do not override the child's will once accountability arrives. And they do not constitute the basis of judgment for a child who dies before accountability.

# PART IX — THE PRINCIPLE OF SPIRITUAL VACANCY (Matthew 12:43–45)

Matthew 12 gives a principle regarding spiritual vacancy and vulnerability. It should not be pressed as a direct definition of 1 Corinthians 7:14, but it illustrates — in broad terms — why a household under active spiritual engagement, prayer, and truth stands in a better position than one left without those things.

## IX.1 — The Illustration

> *"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."* **— Matthew 12:43–45**
>
> *"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."* **— Luke 11:24–26**

Two Gospel accounts confirm this principle. The primary context in Matthew 12 is "this wicked generation" — Israel, which had received the light of Christ's ministry and yet remained spiritually unoccupied. The passage is not a direct commentary on believing and unbelieving households. However, the principle it illustrates is broadly applicable: reformation without spiritual substance leaves a greater vulnerability than existed before. A household engaged with truth, prayer, and godly instruction has active spiritual content where an empty house has none.

**— Matthew 12:43–45 • Luke 11:24–26 (2 witnesses for the principle)**

## IX.2 — The Believer as God's Temple

> *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"* **— 1 Corinthians 3:16**
>
> *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"* **— 1 Corinthians 6:19**

These passages speak to the individual believer, not directly to the household. They do support the understanding that a believer carries an active spiritual presence — the indwelling Spirit — that is a real and substantive difference. When that believer is the parent, the household is shaped by their active spiritual engagement. This is offered as a supporting illustration, not a proven doctrinal mechanism directly linking 1 Corinthians 6:19 to 1 Corinthians 7:14.

**— 1 Corinthians 3:16 • 1 Corinthians 6:19 (2 witnesses — applied here as supporting illustration)**

# PART X — THE CHILD AFFLICTED FROM CHILDHOOD (Mark 9:17–29)

Mark 9 presents a child afflicted by an unclean spirit from a young age, and a father who comes to Christ in desperate faith. The passage demonstrates the value of parental appeal, faith, and intercession. It should not be pressed beyond what the text directly says.

## X.1 — The Account

> *"Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit...And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him."* **— Mark 9:17, 21–22**
>
> *"Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water."* **— Matthew 17:14–15**

Two Gospel accounts confirm this event. The father's answer — "of a child" — indicates the condition had been present from an early age. The text does not specify the boy's exact age at the time of healing, nor does it state that the household had been spiritually empty, or that the father was an unbeliever his entire life. What is plainly before us is a child in severe affliction and a father who comes to Christ in desperate, reaching faith.

**— Mark 9:17–29 • Matthew 17:14–21 (2 witnesses)**

## X.2 — The Father's Faith Is the Turning Point

> *"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."* **— Mark 9:23–24**

The child's deliverance runs through the father. The moment the father reaches toward belief is the moment the child is freed. Whatever the household's prior spiritual condition, the passage demonstrates a clear principle: a parent's faith and intercession have real weight before God on behalf of their child. This is consistent with the covenant household framework established throughout this document.

## X.3 — Active Spiritual Engagement Is Required

> *"And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."* **— Mark 9:29**
>
> *"Thus did Job continually."* **— Job 1:5**

The level of spiritual engagement required in this account is not passive. Jesus points to prayer as the means by which this kind of opposition is overcome. Job's continual intercession for his children models the same sustained principle. The believing parent's advantage is not simply their presence but their active, continued spiritual engagement on behalf of their child.

**— Mark 9:29 • Job 1:5 (2 witnesses supporting active intercession)**

# PART XI — WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE CHILD WHO DIES

## XI.1 — The Holy/Unclean Distinction Applies to the Living Child

Everything established about covenant advantages — access to truth, spiritual nurture, prayer, active godly authority — applies to the living child moving toward accountability. These are advantages for the road. They are not the basis of God's judgment over a child who never completes the road.

> *"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."* **— Romans 5:13**
>
> *"For where no law is, there is no transgression."* **— Romans 4:15**

When a child dies before reaching moral knowledge, the question of covenant advantage becomes irrelevant to eternal standing. The child of unbelieving parents had no accountable knowledge. The child of believing parents, if still before moral accountability, had no accountable knowledge in the judicial sense. Neither has imputable transgression. Therefore, by the standard argued in this teaching, both stand before God without personal guilt.

## XI.2 — The Father's Revealed Will

> *"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."* **— Matthew 18:14**
>
> *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* **— Genesis 18:25**

Matthew 18:14 reveals the Father's will concerning "these little ones" in the context Jesus gives. Within that context it is plainly stated that He does not will that one of them should perish. Abraham's question — "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" — is answered by the consistent character of God as revealed throughout Scripture. The God who does not impute sin without law, who receives children without condition, whose revealed will is that none of these little ones should perish — that God does right by every child who dies before they can know to choose or refuse.

## XI.3 — The Child of Unbelievers Who Dies Is Not Condemned

The child of two unbelieving parents who dies before accountability is not condemned, for three reasons, each supported by two or more witnesses:

1. Sin is not imputed where there is no accountable knowledge — this applies to every child regardless of parentage (Romans 5:13; Romans 4:15)
2. Each soul is judged for what it has done, not for what its parents have done (Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
3. God is no respecter of persons — He cannot hold one child to a different standard than another for what neither has done (Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34)

The "unclean" label describes the child's covenant position in life — outside the sphere of the believing household's influence. It is a statement about spiritual advantage and privilege, not a verdict over the child's soul. When the child dies before accountability, that label no longer

applies as a category of judgment, because the basis of judgment — known transgression — is absent.

# PART XII — COMMON OBJECTIONS ANSWERED FROM SCRIPTURE

### OBJECTION 1: "All humans are guilty in Adam, including children."

Response: Scripture distinguishes between inherited death and imputed personal guilt. These are not the same thing.

> *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* **— Romans 5:12**
>
> *"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."* **— Romans 5:13**

Paul makes the distinction within three verses. Death is inherited through Adam and is universal. Personal guilt requires law. Children inherit mortality; they do not thereby inherit personal condemnation.

**— Romans 5:12 • Romans 5:13 (2 witnesses)**

### OBJECTION 2: "Psalm 51:5 proves children are sinful from birth."

Response: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" is poetic confession, not judicial declaration.

> *"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."* **— Psalm 51:7**

Snow is not morally pure. This is figurative language expressing the depth of David's felt guilt. The judicial standard for guilt comes from God's own declaration:

> *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son."* **— Ezekiel 18:20**

Where Psalm 51 (poetic confession) and Ezekiel 18:20 (God's judicial standard) appear to conflict, God's own judicial standard governs.

**— Ezekiel 18:20 • Romans 5:13 (2 witnesses)**

### OBJECTION 3: "The unclean child of unbelievers is condemned."

Response: The terms "holy" and "unclean" in 1 Corinthians 7:14 are covenantal and positional, not salvific (see Part VII). The internal proof is the word "sanctified" applied to the unbelieving spouse in the same verse — a spouse Paul shows is not automatically saved in verse 16.

> *"...else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."* **— 1 Corinthians 7:14**
>
> *"For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?"* **— 1 Corinthians 7:16**

If "sanctified" does not mean "saved" for the spouse, then "holy" is not an eternal reception verdict and "unclean" is not an eternal condemnation verdict for the child. These are positional, covenantal terms describing standing in life, not eternal destiny.

> *NOTE — Single Witness: This interpretation rests on the internal logic of a single passage. Flagged accordingly.*

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### OBJECTION 4: "Children require baptism for salvation."

Response: Scripture requires belief as the condition for baptism. Children below moral accountability cannot exercise that believing response.

> *"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."* **— Mark 10:14**
>
> *"And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* **— Acts 8:37**

Jesus receives little children and declares, "of such is the kingdom of God," without placing baptism upon them in that scene. Acts 8:37 establishes belief as the precondition for baptism. A child below moral accountability cannot exercise that believing response. Therefore baptism cannot be bound upon pre-accountable children as a condition they must personally fulfill.

**— Mark 10:14 • Acts 8:37 (2 witnesses)**

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### OBJECTION 5: "Only children of believers are received — the rest are lost."

Response: No scriptural passage limits the reception of children to those born of believing parents. To add that qualifier is to go beyond what is written.

> *"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."* **— Mark 10:14**
>
> *"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."* **— Romans 5:13**

Neither statement contains a qualifier based on parentage. Adding one — "of such is the kingdom, provided their parents believe" — is an addition to Scripture (Proverbs 30:6; 1 Corinthians 4:6). The basis of the child's standing is the absence of imputable transgression, not the presence of parental faith.

**— Mark 10:14 • Romans 5:13 (2 witnesses)**

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### OBJECTION 6: "There is no age of accountability in the New Testament."

Response: Correct — Scripture does not use that phrase. But Scripture does establish the underlying principle that governs it, consistently across both Testaments.

> *"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."* **— Romans 5:13**
>
> *"Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin."* **— John 9:41**

Rejecting an unscriptural label does not negate a revealed principle. The distinction between those with accountable knowledge and those without it is in the text; only the doctrinal term is not.

**— Romans 5:13 • John 9:41 (2 witnesses; see also Romans 4:15, John 15:22, James 4:17)**

# PART XIII — DOCTRINAL CONCLUSIONS

## Affirmed and Supported by Two or More Witnesses

1. God distinguishes between children and accountable adults, and judges accordingly (Numbers 14:29; Numbers 14:31; Deuteronomy 1:39)
2. Moral accountability is connected to knowledge of good and evil, not to age or biology alone (Deuteronomy 1:39; Isaiah 7:15–16)
3. Scripture connects imputed guilt with revealed law and accountable knowledge — five New Testament witnesses support this consistently (Romans 5:13; Romans 4:15; John 9:41; John 15:22; James 4:17)
4. Guilt is individual — the child does not bear the iniquity of the parent (Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
5. Death and condemnation are distinct events — all die through Adam; judgment is individual and conditioned on what was done in the body (Romans 5:12; Hebrews 9:27)
6. Children are received by Christ; David's statement concerning his deceased infant supports the hope that children who die are received by God — Witnesses: Mark 10:14 • Matthew 19:14 • 2 Samuel 12:23
7. Matthew 18:14 reveals the Father's will that little ones should not perish, within the context Jesus gives — supported by Matthew 18:10, Mark 10:14, Matthew 19:14
8. The New Covenant is better — if Scripture gives hope for the child under the lesser covenant, the better covenant gives no reason to reduce that hope (Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 7:22; Romans 5:20)
9. God does not change between covenants — the same God who received children under the Old receives them under the New (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8)
10. God is no respecter of persons — the same standard applies to every child regardless of parentage (Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34)
11. God has always operated through households as a covenant unit (Genesis 7:1; Exodus 12:13; Acts 11:14; Acts 16:31–32)
12. A household with an active, praying believer carries real covenant advantages — access to truth, instruction, intercession — though this does not guarantee salvation or constitute the basis of judgment for children who die before accountability
13. The principle of spiritual vacancy in Matthew 12 illustrates, without directly proving, why a household engaged with prayer and truth stands in a better position than one without those things
14. Even the child of two unbelieving parents who dies before accountability is not condemned, because sin is not imputed without accountable knowledge and God is no respecter of persons

## Not Affirmed — Therefore Not Doctrine

1. A universal numerical age of accountability — Scripture gives a principle, not a number
2. Infant condemnation on the basis of Adam alone — Romans 5:13 separates inherited death from imputed personal guilt

3. Automatic salvation of children of believers only — Scripture places no such qualifier
4. Automatic condemnation of children of unbelievers who die before accountability — the principle of no imputation without accountable knowledge applies without regard to parentage
5. Automatic household salvation — Acts 16 shows the Word brought to the whole house; individual response is still required

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*"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*

**— Genesis 18:25**

*That conclusion is not built on sentiment. It is drawn from the revealed character of God, the distinction between death and judgment, the non-imputation of sin without accountable knowledge, and Christ's own reception of little children. Where this document has stated inference as inference and illustration as illustration, the argument stands on what Scripture directly says — and what Scripture directly says is sufficient.*